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Reimagining Ancient Italy: New Directions in Italian Archaeology

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Reimagining Ancient Italy: New Directions in Italian Archaeology

Abstract

In the modern imagination, Italy is a land of rolling vineyards, dramatic coastal vistas, and of course, extraordinary food— infinite varieties of pasta, delicate pastries, rich cheeses, and earthy wines. Italian archaeology does not perhaps conjure up quite such an image of richness and diversity. The great monuments of Rome—the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Roman Forum, and the catacombs—have dominated foreigners' experience of Italian archaeology since the era of the Grand Tour. The practice of archaeology was, until the 1960s, similarly limited: the search for Greco-Roman antiquities— sculpture, vases, temples, and rich houses—preoccupied Italian and foreign archaeologists alike, and modern archaeological technique was slow to take hold.

Disciplines

Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity | Arts and Humanities | Classical Archaeology and Art History | Classics

Reimagining Ancient Italy

NEW DIRECTIONS
IN ITALIAN
ARCHAEOLOGY

IN THE MODERN IMAGINATION, Italy is a land of rolling vineyards, dramatic coastal vistas, and of course, extraordinary food—infinite varieties of pasta, delicate pastries, rich cheeses, and earthy wines. Italian archaeology does not perhaps

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No longer. Archaeology in Italy is now on par with its food—some of the best in the world. Cutting-edge technologies and techniques are a staple of archaeological education in Italy; large-scale projects are subjecting whole landscapes to archaeological scrutiny, while an interest in worlds beyond the Greco-Roman has begun to illuminate Italy's Middle Ages, which are now anything but dark.

This issue of *Expedition* showcases some of the most exciting examples of current Italian archaeology. Included are two Penn Museum excavations, plus three other projects spanning prehistory to the Middle Ages, and ranging from the Tuscan coast to central Sicily. Cam Grey, Mariaelena Ghisleni, Emanuele Vaccaro, and I begin things with a project the Grand Tour never would have visited—the first-ever excavation of Roman peasant farms. Elizabeth Fentress, Caroline Goodson, and Marco Maiuro present another Penn project—their extraordinary work at the imperial Villa Magna. Both of these projects have been training Penn graduate and undergraduate students in field techniques. Giuliano Volpe's article is a prime example of modern techniques revealing a heretofore totally unknown but incredibly rich archaeological landscape—Roman Apulia. New work on Later Roman



This special issue of *Expedition* focuses on five current excavations that range from Tuscany to Sicily. Read on, and enjoy your trip!

archaeology is represented by Patrizio Pensabene and Enrico Gallochio's article on the great villa of Piazza Armerina in central Sicily, famous for its mosaics and now revealed in all its splendor. Giovanna Bianchi's discussion of silver mining in Tuscany—an industry that literally paid for the Early Renaissance—shows the advances in medieval archaeology that have not only shed new light on Tuscan castles and cities, but have begun a significant trend in Italian archaeology, namely, the building of archaeological parks and the empowering of local communities.

All this great archaeology makes for hungry work, so each article also presents a brief showcase of local food, wine, and restaurants. Travel directions and other visitor information are also provided. All that is left is to book your ticket! Buon viaggio—and enjoy this special issue of *Expedition*—Italy. 🏠

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